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July 1, 2000

Dear Arizona Adult Educator:

Ensuring that all learners have access to extraordinary education is a commitment that the Arizona Department of Education takes very seriously. It isn't just a catchphrase. It is a philosophy that drives all we do.

As such, we do not differentiate between the rich and the poor, between urban and rural; or between children and adults. And this is very important -- we believe that, whether eight or eighty years old, all learners are entitled to excellence.

The Arizona Adult Education Standards Initiative affirms our commitment to excellence. This critical project, now in its third year, brings together many of the most thoughtful educators in our state to create high standards for adult learners. As I review the content and performance standards and sample activities contained in this document, I am confident that all adult learners will receive an educational experience that is consistent, regardless of program type, and one that reflects the highest quality in curriculum and instruction.

In Arizona we have made significant progress over the past several years to implement high standards for students enrolled in traditional educational programs. I am very pleased that we are demanding high standards from learners enrolled in non-traditional and adult education programs as well. The content and performance standards delineated herein provide the cornerstone by which we will build quality teaching and learning. Most importantly, they afford adult learners the support they need to achieve their goals in terms of work, family and community and ultimately, to build quality lives.

Sincerely,

Lisa Graham Keegan
Superintendent of Public Instruction

July 1, 2000

Dear Arizona Adult Educator:

It is with much enthusiasm and appreciation that I write this introduction to the second edition of the Arizona Adult Education Standards.

The Arizona Adult Education Standards Initiative represents one of the most important professional endeavors designed and implemented by Arizona's adult education community to ensure consistency in program content and learner outcomes throughout the state. The fundamental purpose of this work, now in its third year, is to ensure the highest levels of achievement for all adult learners through nothing less than *extraordinary education!*

In recent years, our state legislature and the United States Congress have demanded that we provide evidence that learners enrolled in adult education programs do, in fact, achieve high levels of educational performance. The Arizona Adult Education Standards Initiative **preceded** legislative mandates to report individual learner outcomes. At least six months before passage of the Work Force Investment Act, the Arizona adult education community came together to develop the components of a comprehensive, statewide student performance accountability system. The collaborative efforts of adult educators and the Arizona Department of Education over the past two-and-one half years have resulted in this publication of content standards and performance standards for:

- Reading
- Writing
- Mathematics
- Science
- Social Studies
- ESOL
- Citizenship Test Preparation

In addition, we are in the final stages of developing a valid and reliable system of measuring educational gains as well as an electronic data collection and reporting system that reports individual student gains.

Commitment to appropriate and timely professional development and technical assistance has been a critical component throughout the process to support adult educators in the creation and initial implementation of the Arizona Adult Education Standards Initiative. This commitment will continue during the next several years as we pursue our mission to “provide the framework for adult learners to maximize their potential in the community, family, and workplace.”

As you implement the content and performance standards contained in this document, please take note of what seems to work well and those areas you feel need further development. This Standards document is dynamic and “living”, open to continuous improvement and refinement. We expect to revise this Standards document periodically. Let us know what you think as you work with this important and valuable tool.

Finally, I want to express my sincere appreciation to the many outstanding adult educators who contributed their expertise, experience, and energy to this remarkable initiative. I am deeply grateful for their significant contributions to the profession and in awe of the example their work sets to ensure that Arizona’s adult learners receive *extraordinary education*.

Sincerely,

Karen Liersch
State Director of Adult Education

OVERVIEW

ARIZONA ADULT EDUCATION STANDARDS INITIATIVE

The Arizona Adult Education Standards Initiative (Standards Initiative) represents a proactive effort by Arizona's adult education community to ensure consistency in program content and student outcomes for adult learners throughout the state. The Initiative is sponsored by the Arizona Department of Education – Division of Adult Education and developed by an outstanding cadre of the state's adult educators.

The fundamental goal of this multi-year project is to ensure high levels of achievement for all adult learners in Arizona. As such, there are several critical reasons why it is so important to the future of adult education in Arizona as well as in the nation.

Value to the Adult Learner

The Standards Initiative provides consistent content and performance standards for implementation in all programs funded by the Arizona Department of Education.

Value to Programs and Instructional Practices

The Standards Initiative improves articulation and allows adult educators to assess student performance and measure program effectiveness with greater accuracy. In addition, exemplars of curriculum alignment developed by adult educators during the spring and summer of 2000 also provide outstanding examples of curricula in each of the content areas based on the standards.

Value to the State of Arizona

The Standards Initiative establishes a strong foundation for effective delivery of services to all adult learners. Moreover, the Initiative offers benchmarks for learning and program performance and sets forth high expectations for quality and accountability.

Value to the Profession of Adult Education

The Standards Initiative raises the bar on instructional performance and accountability which, in turn, increases the credibility of adult education within the field of teaching and learning. In addition, the Arizona Adult Education Standards complement similar efforts on the national level (i.e., *Equipped for the Future* published by the National Institute for Literacy) by providing the framework for adult learners to maximize their potential in the community, family, and workplace.

HOW THE ADULT EDUCATION STANDARDS WERE DEVELOPED

The process used to develop the adult education content and performance standards was designed by the Arizona Department of Education (Division of Adult Education) with the assistance of two consulting firms: Leadership Learning Systems, Inc. (based in Arizona and Illinois) and StandardsWork (Washington, D.C.).

In order to create a clear focus and ensure leadership of the Initiative from professionals the field, an open invitation was extended to adult educators statewide requesting participation in the Standards Initiative. The initial team convened in January 1998, to inaugurate the Initiative. As a result of their thoughtful dialogue and discussion, the following critical statements were created to direct the work of the Standards Initiative.

Beliefs

We believe adult learners are

- multi-faceted, unique individuals
- capable of learning
- motivated by diverse life experiences
- exploring ways to improve their lives through relevant educational opportunities.

We believe adult education is a learner-centered, interactive process which

- values and supports the individual in defining and achieving personal goals
- develops and improves basic and life skills in the community, family, and workplace.

Vision

Adult education standards are the cornerstone for quality teaching, quality learning, and quality lives.

Mission

The Arizona Adult Education Standards Initiative provides the framework for Adult learners to maximize their potential in the community, family, and workplace. The project provides consistency and continuity of educational services throughout the state as well as an easily understood model which communicates the contributions of adult education.

The approach used to create the Arizona Adult Education content and performance standards combined both process and substance. The process was highly participatory and encompassed active involvement and input of more than 200 adult educators across the state during the period of February 1998 – June 2000. The substance focused on the articulation and continuous improvement of rigorous and realistic standards for adult learning in specific subject areas including reading, writing, mathematics, science, social studies, ESOL, and citizenship test preparation.

THE STANDARDS INITIATIVE TIMELINE

A Steering Committee of adult educators provided overall guidance and direction throughout this period. Facilitation of the process was provided by Gail A. Digate of Leadership Learning Systems, Inc. and consultation in developing content and performance standards was provided by Susan Pimentel of StandardsWork.

A brief description of each phase of the Arizona Adult Education Standards Initiative appears below:

Phase I: January – December 1998

Teams of adult educators met to draft content standards in reading, writing, mathematics, ESOL, and Citizenship Test Preparation. These teams consulted a variety of resources, including the Arizona K-12 Academic Standards. A description of the relationship of the adult education content standards and the K-12 academic standards is provided on page 7. Several external, expert reviewers provided feedback and comments for continuous improvement to the original drafts.

Phase II: January – June 1999

During the second year of the Initiative, expanded teams of adult educators met to:

- conduct focus groups with adult educators and adult learners to solicit comments and suggestions on the drafts of the content standards. Focus group sessions were held in Flagstaff, Phoenix, Tucson and Yuma.
- A second external review was conducted by Susan Pimentel of StandardsWork in August 1998.
- Following adoption of the content standards by the Steering Committee, initial work began on the development of performance standards in reading, writing, mathematics, ESOL and Citizenship Test preparation in September.
- Two additional teams were established to plan future implementation efforts: Professional Development and Marketing/Communications.

Phase III: July 1999 – June 2000

During the third year of the Initiative, the focus of work included:

- Initial release of the content standards in reading, writing, mathematics, ESOL, and Citizenship Test preparation at the 1999 Arizona Adult Education Conference (September 29 – October 2)
- Regional focus groups to solicit input on performance standards. These sessions were held in Flagstaff, Holbrook, Phoenix, Tucson, and Yuma.

- Revision of both content and performance standards to reflect the federal requirements of an additional level in ABE, the division of Adult Secondary Education (ASE – formerly GED preparation) into two levels, and adding two additional ESOL levels.
- Creation of content standards in science and social studies
- Regional focus groups to solicit and gather input on drafts of content standards in science and social studies
- Establishment of a work team to develop recommendations regarding appropriate assessment strategies in alignment with the content standards and federal requirements to document educational gain (Note: Recommendations will be submitted to the Arizona Department of Education – Division of Adult Education) in the autumn, 2000).
- Creation and training of a cadre of adult educators to support implementation of the Arizona Adult Education Standards Initiative (i.e., Standards Specialists)
- Creation of curriculum alignment exemplars in reading, writing, mathematics, and ESOL by teams of adult educators from programs across the state (i.e., Curriculum Aligners)
- Implementation of a four-day summer institute which brought together more than 100 adult educators (i.e., Standards Specialists and Curriculum Aligners) to complete development of curriculum alignment exemplars and begin articulation of strategies and action plans designed to support implementation of the Standards Initiative in adult education programs throughout the state.

It was during this institute that the State Director of Adult Education remarked that what began as a curriculum frameworks “project” indeed had become a major “initiative” destined to transform adult education in the state of Arizona and ensure “extraordinary” education to every adult learner.

Phase IV: July 2000 – September 2001

The following activities are anticipated for implementation in the next phase of the Standards Initiative:

- Pilot project to implement and “test” assessment strategies
- Consultation and support to adult education programs by Standards Specialists to implement content and performance standards in reading, writing, mathematics, ESOL, and citizenship test preparation

- Development of performance standards in science and social studies (including input and feedback from the field via the Arizona Department of Education (Division of Adult Education) website)
- Focus groups with representatives of community colleges regarding implications of the Arizona Adult Education Standards Initiative for adult learners' matriculation to community college programs
- Evaluation of the Standards Initiative (1998 – 2001)

Phase V: July 2001 – June 2004

- Complete implementation of content and performance standards in reading, writing, mathematics, science, social studies, ESOL, and citizenship test preparation

(Note: Implementation of science and social studies content and performance standards is required of adult education providers by July 1, 2002.)
- Complete implementation of assessment strategies

(Note: Implementation of assessment strategies is required of adult education providers by July 1, 2002.)
- Periodic review and revision of content and performance standards as needed (e.g. commitment to continuous improvement)

THE IMPORTANCE OF SCIENCE, SOCIAL STUDIES AND TECHNOLOGY

The first edition of the Arizona Adult Education Standards was released in September, 1999, and contained content standards in Reading, Writing, Mathematics, ESOL and Citizenship Test Preparation. This (second) edition provides updated content and performance standards in these disciplines along with content standards in Science and Social Studies.

The purpose of including content standards in Science and Social Studies is to ensure that students who *so choose* would have access to instruction in these disciplines. As adult literacy education in Arizona is not compulsory, adult learners *choose* to take the courses that enable them to reach educational goals that further their ability to function in the family, the community and the workplace. Making available to adult learners a solid foundation in the physical, natural and social sciences enables them to invest in their own personal and professional development.

As technological advances propel rapid changes in how people live and work, all adult learners will need to develop and refine skills that keep them competitive and productive in the workplace. Now and into the future, access to, and basic computer and Internet skills, will enable adult learners to function successfully in the family, the community and the workplace. During FY2000, the ADE provided resources and training to make all ADE-funded programs Internet-connected: for administration, instruction and professional development. During the next three years, the ADE will continue to provide resources and training to enable adult education and family literacy teachers to become computer literate and Internet savvy. By the end of FY2004, it is expected that Arizona's Adult Education Standards will be revised to reflect a much greater expertise with technology on the part of adult educators, and a much higher expectation of adult learners with regard to basic computer and Internet skills.

RELATIONSHIP OF THE ARIZONA ADULT EDUCATION CONTENT STANDARDS TO ARIZONA K-12 ACADEMIC STANDARDS

The initial charge from the State Director of Adult Education in January 1998 to develop content standards in adult education carried with it the need to craft world-class standards (not minimal competencies) and to customize these standards for adult learners. That said, content standards contained herein reflect sensible criteria for usefulness, intelligibility, rigor and measurability. In addition, content standards focus on academics, contain the right mix of skills and content, and represent a reasonable pattern of cumulative learning that is manageable (given the constraints of time).

A critical element in the process of developing content standards in adult education involved benchmarking the drafts of content standards to world-class levels and then reviewing them for relevancy, intelligibility and measurability.

As Arizona's academic standards for students in grades K-12 are considered to be among the best in the nation, adult educators used this document as a valuable resource in both crafting and reviewing the adult education standards. Comparing what students in K-12 are capable of accomplishing with expectations for adult learners helped to aim higher when judging the potential of adult learners.

In summary, the focus in consulting the Arizona K-12 Academic Standards was to align the documents (i.e., content standards in Adult Education and K-12) in terms of rigor and comprehensiveness. However, no attempt was made to gain a direct one-to-one correspondence between the two documents as the two systems of education clearly serve different populations with specific needs, and facing diverse challenges and opportunities.

HOW TO READ CONTENT AND PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

If you are confused about the language of standards, you are not alone. This section provides definitions for standards-related terms and an analogy (using a non-academic example) to illustrate several important concepts. The analogy appears in *italics*.

Goal

A goal is the end result of a learning experience. A goal often is not measurable in an immediate sense. It reflects a state of *being* rather than a state of *action*. A goal expresses a *purpose* for instruction but does not designate the specific abilities that the learner must possess.

To improve running skills

Content Standard

A content standard *supports* the goal. It defines what a learner must *know* and *be able to do*. A content standard (also referred to as an exit standard) is brief, crisp, and written to the point. It uses jargon-free English so instructors and adult learners can understand it easily.

The learner is able to run one mile.

Indicators and Sub-Indicators

Indicators and sub-indicators contain all the knowledge and skills a learner needs to master the more broadly stated content standard. In essence, indicators and sub-indicators detail the content standard. Educators may refer to indicators and sub-indicators as “further domain specifications” or “benchmarks” that describe the skills, habits, and understandings that the learner must master.

Indicator: *The learner understands the physiology of the body and knows how to run safely.*

- Sub-indicators:
- *Understands physiology of muscles, bones, and Cardiovascular system*
 - *Understands how to warm up and cool down safely*
 - *Understands how to pace self and breathe correctly while running*
 - *Uses correct foot position when running (i.e., heel-toe-heel running)*
 - *Observes the rules of the road (e.g., face traffic, observe signs, run on sidewalk or shoulder of the road)*
-

Sample Activities

Sample activities are designed to illustrate the indicators and sub-indicators. **They are not required;** rather, sample activities are provided to offer instructors some useful ideas, suggestions, and possible ways to bring the standards and indicators to life. In addition, sample activities reflect several core competencies (including communication skills, interpersonal skills, and critical thinking skills) which can be demonstrated within several contexts or settings (including the community, family, and workplace). Sample activities are included in this document as resources for instruction. Sample activities in science and social studies have been cross-referenced to content standards in reading, writing, and mathematics.

Core Competencies

Core competencies, the application of knowledge and skills in communication, interpersonal relations, and critical thinking, are designed as a fundamental element in sample activities.

Communication and interpersonal skills reflect the learner's ability to engage in an interactive process while clearly expressing ideas that lead to mutual understanding. The following skill areas are demonstrated in these activities: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. A learner who communicates effectively is able to respond to an audience, demonstrate a clear sense of purpose, organize information, and deliver information using appropriate language and nonverbal behaviors.

Interpersonal skills encompass the ability to interact appropriately with individuals or groups in a variety of settings. Effective interpersonal interactions require the use of *critical thinking skills* such as analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and application in addition to the effective demonstration of communication skills (e.g., speaking, listening, reading, and writing).

The outcome of an activity is influenced by the environment or circumstances in which the activity occurs and the skills applied (e.g., communication, interpersonal, and/or critical thinking).

A sample activity may involve the learner in the process of entering a charity run in support of cancer research.

Performance Standard

A performance standard indicates how competent or adept a learner's demonstration must be to show attainment of the content standard. In other words, a performance standard defines "*how good is good enough*" to meet the content standard. Performance standards specify the quality of learner performance – acceptable, excellent, or something less. The level of performance is determined by the extent to which students demonstrate command over the concepts of skills outlined in the content standards. Such command must include both quality and quantity.

Performance standards:

- Specify particular concepts and skills that the learner must know and be able to do as defined by the content standards (often in greater detail with some additional explanation of the type, quality, range and depth of the performance expectations)
- Define several different levels of achievement that outline the extent to which the learner demonstrates command over the concepts and skills within the content standards. The Arizona Adult Education Standards Initiative has adopted four levels of proficiency:

Beginning (a ways to go before passing)

Approaching (getting closer)

Met (passing)

Exceeds (excellent performance, beyond passing)

- Establish the difficulty of material with which the learner must work (e.g., vocabulary lists, spelling lists, reading lists or reading difficulty levels).

A learner at one proficiency level is able to display most of the knowledge, skills, and processes at that particular level (e.g., met level) and lower proficiency levels (e.g., approaching and beginning levels). Once assessment strategies have been adopted, the proficiency levels and their descriptors are intended to inform and guide interpretation of

the scores. In short, each proficiency level descriptor is a statement of the knowledge, skills, and abilities expected to be held by the average learner who is associated with that level.

In an attempt to ensure consistency across the various disciplines, the following terms were adopted by the Performance Standards Work Team:

- *Occasionally, seldom* Able to demonstrate skills and command of the concepts up to 49% of the time
- *Sometimes* Able to demonstrate skills and command of the concepts up to 50 – 74% of the time
- *Often; most of the time* Able to demonstrate skills and command of the concepts up to 75 – 89% of the time
- *Consistently* Able to demonstrate skills and command of the concepts up to 90 – 100% of the time

Returning to the sports analogy, consider time trials for Olympic runners as a vehicle to motivate and measure performance. For example, Olympic runners are not simply told they have to run fast in order to qualify for the 100-yard dash. Rather, they know exactly what times they need to beat. Without performance standards, a deliberate stroll could constitute running a mile.

The learner is able to run one mile in seven minutes.

Curriculum

Curriculum is best characterized as descriptions of what should take place in the classroom and describes in greater detail the topics, themes, units, and questions contained in the content standards. Curriculum serves as a guide for instructors; addressing teaching techniques, recommending activities, scope and sequence, and modes of presentation considered most effective.

In addition, curriculum indicates those textbooks, materials, activities, and equipment that best help the learner achieve the content standards. Unlike content standards, curriculum can vary from region to region or program to program as well as from teacher to teacher, provided that the focus remains on delivering the “big” ideas and concepts that the content standards require the learner to understand and apply. Content standards are the framework for curriculum.

Curriculum within the sports analogy example include units on physiology, questions and topics to cover, suggested reading material, and training sessions needed in order to ensure the learner is able to run one mile safely and efficiently.

Assessment

Assessment defines the nature of evidence required to demonstrate that the content standard has been met (e.g., essay, solution to a mathematical problem, answers to questions in reference to a reading passage).

In the charge to the Assessment Strategies Work Team (January, 2000), Karen M. Liersch, State Director of Adult Education specified the following requirements for assessment in adult education in Arizona:

- It will insure reliability and validity
- It will provide for pre-, interim, and post-testing
- It will be aligned to and test the Arizona Adult Education Content Standards in Reading, Writing, Mathematics, and ESOL
- It will be criterion – or standards - referenced
- It will inform instruction
- It will serve as an accountability measure
- It will be adaptable to a variety of instructional environments
- The Assessment will accommodate learners with special needs

Assessments for the sports analogy might require the learner to run one mile, demonstrating ability to use proper form and observe safety rules of running (this would be an example of *performance-based assessment*).

Another approach might ask the learner to complete a written test, Demonstrating understanding of physiology of running (this would be an example of a *criterion-referenced test*, including multiple choice and short answer questions).

Again, the performance standard specifies the learner's degree of proficiency on those demonstrations or assessments, defining what it means to run the mile in one of three ways or levels: expert, competent, or less than competent fashion.

**Hand in Hand:
The Arizona Adult Education Standards Initiative
&
NIFL's Equipped For the Future**

In 1993, the National Educational Goals Panel issued this challenge:

“By the year 2000, every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.”

Adult Educators at both the national level in Washington, D.C. and the state level in Arizona responded to this initiative.

On the federal level, the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) organized the Equipped For the Future (EFF) Project. In Arizona, the Department of Education began the Adult Education Standards Initiative.

The resulting Vision, Mission, Beliefs, and Supporting Materials of the Arizona Adult Education Standards Initiative clearly parallel and include a common foundation and vocabulary with the Role Maps, Generative Skills, and Common Activities of the Equipped for the Future Project.

Although the Arizona Adult Education Standards are more skill specific and structured in a more traditional framework in contrast to the EFF standards which are more process oriented within a broader organizational context, today, we see both efforts working hand in hand in the following ways:

- Both are student centered, always involving adult learners in the formulation and articulation of materials to suit the adult learners' needs
- Both are contextualized incorporating the role of the adult learner in the family, workplace, and community
- Both appreciate the necessity of including the development of the adult learner's use of communication, interpersonal, critical thinking, and decision-making skills

As the Arizona Department of Education/Division of Adult Education and the National Institute for Literacy continue to refine and expand their Standards, they will mutually support each other in the ongoing effort to ensure adult learners with access to extraordinary education.

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(2000)

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